

"Farmington" (Old John Speed Residence)  
Three-quarter mile from Louisville  
Jefferson County, Kentucky

HABS KY 24 - 24

HABS  
KY  
56-Louvi.V  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. 20

Historic American Buildings Survey  
G. M. Grimes, District Officer  
304 Martin Brown Building  
Louisville, Kentucky

Name of structure: "Farmington" (Old John Speed Residence)

Location: On Bardstown Road, three-quarter mile  
from Louisville City Limits,  
Jefferson County, Kentucky.

Owner or  
custodian: D. Bischoff

Address:

Date built: 1810  
(approx)

Architect  
or builder:

Present  
condition: Excellent

Number of  
stories: One story and attic; also basement.

Material used  
in construction: Foundation: Brick.  
Exterior walls: Brick.  
Interior partitions: Brick and frame,  
plastered.  
Floors: Wood, random width boards over  
joists; basement: wood, probably  
laid over concrete.  
Roof: Frame construction, covered with  
standing seam tin.

Description: The floor plan of this house is different  
architectural ~~than~~ <sup>from</sup> most of the early residences recorded  
and historical in this Survey.

The front entrance hall is set back several feet from the main front of the building to provide for a portico of possibly twelve feet in depth, and yet not project more than five or six feet from the front wall. The entrance hall is about fourteen feet wide.

From this hall one can enter each of the two front rooms and the two octagonal shaped rooms immediately behind them. The arched doorway in the center of the rear wall of this main hall leads into a long hall approximately six feet wide extending to the rear wall to a door opening on to the rear porch. Off this hall doors lead into the rooms on either side, closets, stairs to attic, etc.

Each octagonal room has a fireplace with wood mantels, almost identical in design and ornamentations.

One of the window lights in the octagonal room on the north has the name "John Speed" scratched on its surface.

The front entrance doorway has four engaged reeded pilasters on the outside, side-lights, and segmental arched fan above, all beautifully executed.

Heavy hand-hewn timbers, principally oak and poplar, including rafters, ridge pieces, columns, purlins, hip rafters, etc., all mortised and tenoned together and secured with large wood pegs, form the main roof framing. The size of these timbers is larger than would have been required for the support of the roof, which probably accounts for its withstanding several severe wind storms without any damage whatsoever.

The ceilings of the first floor are approximately fifteen feet high.

A short distance from the house stands the brick smoke-house, in good condition; the old stone spring-house, and the remains of what appears to have been a stone stable.

Quoting from a book entitled "The Speed Family", privately printed by Thos. Speed and family, 1892:

"'Farmington' was built by John Speed, who was born in Virginia, May 17, 1772; came to Kentucky with his father over the Wilderness Road in 1782. Owned a large tract of land between the Taylorsville and Bardstown Roads, and built the brick house known as Farmington about 1810.

"James Speed, one of the sons, was Attorney General under Abraham Lincoln, and Joshua Speed, another son, was Lincoln's most intimate friend at Springfield, Illinois. After his first tempestuous love affair with Mary Todd, Lincoln left Springfield, Illinois, during the summer of 1841, and spent the major portion of that summer and autumn at Farmington, getting himself together, and he married Mary Todd the next year".

*G. M. Grimes*

*Revised 1936. H. C. F.*

Addendum to:

Farmington (Speed House)  
3033 Bardstown Road  
Louisville  
Jefferson County  
Kentucky  
(as recorded in 1934)

HABS No. KY-24

HABS,  
KY,  
56 - LOUVI.  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Architectural and Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADDENDUM TO

FARMINGTON (Speed House)

HABS No. KY-24

HABS  
KY  
56-LOUVI.V,  
1-  
p.3

Location: 3033 Bardstown Road, Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky.

Present Owner and Occupant: Historic Homes Foundation.

Present Use: Museum.

Significance: Farmington is one of the few houses constructed after a design by Thomas Jefferson. Its history of preservation has been remarkable. It now remains virtually as originally constructed, with the exception of the inclusion of modern amenities and some restoration.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1808-1810. Jefferson County tax records coupled with excellent family records of the Speed family verify these dates.
2. Architect: Local architect not known; built after a plan by Thomas Jefferson, no. 191 in the Coolidge Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Further credence is lent to the authorship of the design by the fact that Thomas Jefferson was the ward of Dr. Thomas Walker, the grandfather of the wife of the first owner.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Present-day Farmington occupies lots 20,21,33,51,56,57, and 58 of block 81-K in the City of Louisville. The following references to the title of this land, with the exception of the first title, are found in the Clerk's Office in the Jefferson County Courthouse, Louisville.

1780 Deed, April 6, 1780, original deed at Farmington. Patrick Henry conveyed to James Speed a 375 acre tract of land.

1846 Deed, March 27, 1846, recorded in Deed Book 66, page 120. Lucy G. Speed, widow of John Speed, son of James, sold Farmington to Austin L. Peay, her son-in-law, for \$16,000.

1865 Deed, November 11, 1865, recorded in Deed Book 124, page 496. Peachy W. Peay, widow of Austin L. Peay sold Farmington to Henry Drescher for \$16,000.

- 1908 Deed June 1, 1908, recorded in Deed Book 681, page 134. Elizabeth Drescher, Henry Drescher and Sophie Drescher, George L. Drescher and Philippine Drescher, John Drescher and Annie Drescher, Annie Amrie Wempe and Henry Wempe, Barbara Eigelbach and William Eigelbach, and Applonia Hooch and Henry Hooch, heirs of Henry Drescher by will recorded in Will Book 27, page 69, sold Farmington to Joe Bischoff, Jr.
- 1946 Deed, August 12, 1946, recorded in Deed Book 2151, page 525. Dorothy Bischoff, Margaret Bischoff, Anna Bischoff, Rosa Hietkamper and John Heitkamper, Clara Stoke and Louis Stoke, and Lorena Waller and H. Waller, heirs of Joe Bischoff, Jr. by will dated September 18, 1915 and recorded in Will Book 35, page 442, sold Farmington to Susanne Smith Tyler.
- 1949 Deed, December 24, 1949, recorded in Deed Book 2575, page 461. Susanne Smith Tyler conveyed part of the land to Violet Fesler Smith.
- 1955 Deed, November 16, 1955, recorded in Deed Book 3352, page 485. Violet Fesler Smith and F. Porter Smith sold the portion containing the house to Robert Kennedy Smith, IV.
- 1958 Deed, January 14, 1958, recorded in Deed Book 3485, page 464. Violet Fesler Smith and F. Porter Smith and Robert Kennedy Smith, IV sold lots 21 and 56 to Historic Homes Foundation, Inc. for \$45,500. On January 31, 1958 a deed correcting the description of the lots was issued, recorded in Deed Book 3489, page 404.
- 1959 Deed, October 24, 1959, recorded in Deed Book 3598, page 378. Anna Bischoff, Dorothy Bischoff, and Margaret Bischoff sold approximately six acres adjoining Farmington, which they had inherited under the will of Joe Bischoff, Jr., recorded in Will Book 35, page 442, for \$36,000. This was lot 57 of block 81-K.
- 1962 Deed, March 30, 1962, recorded in Deed Book 3757, page 129. The Commonwealth of Kentucky by Robert F. Matthews, Commissioner of Finance, and Bert Combs, Governor, sold lot 58 to Historic Homes Foundation, Inc. Following is a brief tracing of the title of this lot:

<u>Deed Book</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
3135	142	March 18, 1954	Harry B. Taylor Rosa Taylor	Commonwealth of Kentucky
2469	258	March 18, 1954	The Kentucky Trust Company, Trustee under will of Major Taylor, Will Book 55, page 124	Harry B. Taylor
1814	90	December 26, 1941	Harry B. Taylor 1/2 interest Rosa Taylor	Major Taylor
1590	179	December 10, 1935	Major Taylor	Harry B. Taylor
1589	187	November 25, 1935	A.M. Anderson, receiver of the National Bank of Kentucky.	Major Taylor
1554	311	August 10, 1934	John S. Akers, trustee in bankruptcy (Consoli- dated Realty Company).	A.M. Anderson, receiver of the National Bank of Kentucky
1133	233	February 2, 1925	Henry Deibel Anna Deibel	Consolidated Realty Company
697	142	April 8, 1909	Emma Eicher Philip Eicher Katie L. Kreisher Jacob Kreisher Addie Barth Wm. F. Barth Christina Deibel Elizabeth Diebel	Henry Deibel
696	255	June 22, 1860	Ellen Wright Joseph H. Wright Edward D. Briscoe Lydia E. Briscoe Sarah E. Briscoe all by Tho. P. Smith, Commissioner of the Louisville Chancery Court	Henry Deibel
65	611	March 18, 1846	Mary L. Speed	James Edward Briscoe
1962	Deed, October 19, 1962, recorded in Deed Book 3783, page 547. H. Paul Finley and Onavee Finley sold lot 33 adjoining Farmington to Historic Homes Foundation, Inc. Following is a brief tracing of previous deeds for the lot:			

<u>Deed Book</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
3182	349	July 20, 1954	James L. Bersot Malcolm Burgin C. B. Sparrow Citizen's Fidelity Bank and Trust Company	H. Paul Finley Onavee Finley
trustees of Seneca Church of Christ				
3176	202	July 3, 1954	Seneca Church of Christ Shirley M. Grace	
3125	179	February 18, 1954	Harry B. Taylor	Ralph M. Quinn, Jr.
3025	435	June 12, 1953	Rose Taylor The Kentucky Trust Company, trustee under will of Major Taylor, Will Book 55, page 124.	Fred Hepp, Jr. James C. Puckett, Sr. James W. Largen J.C. Johnson Seneca Church of Christ
two deeds - later deed, deed of clarification				

1963 Deed, August 14, 1963, recorded in Deed Book 3839, page 390.  
Dorothy Bischoff, Margaret Bischoff, and Anna Bischoff sold lot  
20 adjoining Farmington to Historic Homes Foundation, Inc.

Dorothy Bischoff, Margaret Bischoff, and Anna Bischoff acquired  
this lot by deed, dated October 10, 1946 and recorded in Deed  
Book 2171, page 157, from Rosa Heitkamper and John Heitkamper,  
Clara Stoke and Louis Stoke, and Lorena Waller and Henry Waller,  
who had previously acquired it under the will of Joseph Bischoff,  
Jr., recorded in Will Book 35, page 442.

Deed, August 14, 1963, recorded in Deed Book 3839, page 392.  
Othmar S. Stoke and Ethel B. Stoke sold lot 51 adjoining  
Farmington to Historic Homes Foundation, Inc.,

Othmar S. Stoke and Ethel B. Stoke acquired this lot by deed,  
dated April 11, 1956 and recorded in Deed Book 3404, page 448,  
from Dorothy Bischoff, Margaret Bischoff, and Anna Bischoff, who  
had previously acquired it from Rosa Heitkamper and John  
Heitkamper, Clara Stoke and Louis Stoke, and Lorena Waller and  
Henry Waller by deed, dated October 10, 1946 and recorded in Deed  
Book 2171, page 157.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Brass hardware was made in Philadelphia and glass in Pittsburgh. Virtually all other materials, including brick, and labor were locally produced. John Speed supervised construction.
5. Original plans and construction: Except for the Jefferson plan, no other drawings dating from the construction of the house are known to exist.
6. Alterations and additions:

1910 Tin roof replaced original roof of wood shingles, cost \$100.

1946-1949 William C. Tyler, Jr., Louisville architect and owner of Farmington, executed repairs, added plumbing and furnace, and lined the warming kitchen with walnut paneling from the old Louisville Post Office at Fourth and Chestnut Streets.

1959 Historic Homes Foundation restored the house. Restoration included removal of walnut paneling in warming kitchen, replacement of tin roofing with composition shingles simulating wood shingles, sandblasting of rear wall of house, reconstruction of outbuildings, reconstruction of formal garden in the rear yard, restoration of interior, and archaeological digging under kitchen windows.

- B. Historical Context: The Speed family has been prominent throughout the history of Louisville. Leaders in the areas of industry and real estate, they have also been involved in many other areas, including politics and art. The Speed Art Museum at the University of Louisville stands as an enduring memorial to this family.

John Speed, the builder of the house, was ten years old in 1782 when his father, James, moved from Danville, Kentucky. John Speed was first married to Abbie Lemaster from which union two children, Mary and Eliza, were born. Following the death of his first wife, he remarried. His second wife, Lucy Gilmer Fry, was the daughter of Joshua Fry. Her maternal grandfather, Dr. Thomas Walker, served as guardian for Thomas Jefferson. It was Jefferson who drew plans for an addition to the original Farmington, a home in Charlottesville, Virginia owned by Lucy's aunt. Following construction, ten children, Lucy, James, Peachy, Joshua, William Pope, Susan, Philip, J. Smith, Martha and Ann were born in the house. Ann, the youngest, died in childhood.

70 slaves were used on the 87-acre part of the plantation to raise and harvest hemp, which was the family's primary commercial product.

In 1837 Joshua Speed became the roommate of Abraham Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois, where Speed operated a store. Four years later, in August and September of 1841, Lincoln visited Farmington to recover from a broken romance. This visit served to strengthen the bonds of friendship. As a result, on September 1, 1864, Lincoln appointed James Speed as Attorney General of the United States.

Following the Civil War, the house was sold to a German truck farmer, who, in turn, sold it to another of the same trade. Caring little for architecture, they used the main floor of the house for storage. As a result, the house was spared from the addition of amenities such as electricity, plumbing, and central heating.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### General description:

The hip-roofed, one-story house is highlighted by a front projecting pavilion which shelters the entrance doorway. Long narrow columns support the gable roof of the pavilion, and between the columns are the railings. A 11-step stoop with newel posts and railings provides access to the pavilion. A small elliptical window with diamond-shaped panes occupies the tympanum of the gable end, for decorative purposes. The entrance doorway is typically Federal: an exquisite fanlight with four-paned sidelights and flanking pilasters. Both the pavilion and the doorway are similar in design to the ones at nearby Ridgeway (HABS No. KY-68). A handsome gable-roofed porch occupies the rear wall of the house. It is entered by a stairway on either end, and is surrounded by a railing.

The brick walls which cover the house are laid in Flemish bond. A projecting water table between the basement and first floor windows is made of molded bricks. The side elevations have projecting semi-octagonal walls which have windows. All windows have brick lintels. On either side slope of the hipped roof are two towering brick chimneys.

Fortunately, most of the house's original Federal interior features are largely unaltered. Several doorways have round arches, some with fanlight-like transoms, which echo the exterior doorway's features. Chair railings with moldings of various patterns adorn the walls. Fireplaces, though not identical in design, have pilasters, molded cornices and appliques. The kitchen in the basement has a large, simple fireplace.

## PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

### A. Original Architectural Drawings:

Plans: Plate No. 191, Coolidge Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society, 1154 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Books located in the Clerk's Office, Jefferson County Courthouse, Louisville, Kentucky.

Will Books located in the Probate Office, Jefferson County Courthouse, Louisville, Kentucky.

Scrapbook of newspaper clippings, Farmington 1810-1959, located at Farmington.

Docents' Manual for Farmington, located at Farmington.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Clark, Dorothy Park. Farmington.

Durrett, Reuben F. Centenary of Louisville.

McMurtrie, Dr. Henry. Sketches of Louisville.

Nichols, Frederick D. Thomas Jefferson's Architectural Drawings.

Kimball, Fiske. "Jefferson Design for Two Kentucky Houses",  
Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, October,  
1950, vol. 9, no. 3.

"Farmington," brochure by Historic Homes Foundation, Inc.

"Farmington's Chapter in The Lincoln Story," by Barbara Anderson,  
Historic Homes Foundation, Inc., Louisville, Kentucky.

"Lincoln's Visit to Kentucky - 1841," in Lincoln Lore, Bulletin of the  
Lincoln National Life Foundation, Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, ed., The  
Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana, October,  
1966.

Prepared by: David Arbosast  
Architectural Historian  
National Park Service  
August 1974  
and  
Susan McCown  
Historian  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
Spring 1981

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Preservation Alliance of Louisville and Jefferson County, Inc. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1974 at the HABS Field Office in Louisville by Prof. John Haggard, (Syracuse University), Project Supervisor; David Arbogast (Columbia University), Project Historian; Mary Oehrlein, Project Foreman; Bayer Lee (City College of New York), Architect; and Mary M. Herd (University of Tennessee) and Charles Raith (University of Cincinnati), student assistant architects. Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written descriptive data in the spring of 1981, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. HABS staff photographer Jack E. Boucher took the photographs of the structures in 1979.

ADDENDUM TO  
FARMINGTON  
(JOHN SPEED HOUSE)  
3033 Bardstown Road  
Louisville Vicinity  
Jefferson County  
Kentucky

HABS No. KY-24

HABS  
KY,  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
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